



COUNTY OF SAN BENITO
PLANNING & BUILDING INSPECTION SERVICES

3224 Southside Road
Hollister, CA 95023
e-mail: sbcplan@planning.co.san-benito.ca.us

Phone: 831-637-5313
Fax: 831-637-5334

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Mr. Joe Horwedel
Director of Planning, Building, Code Enforcement
City of San Jose
200 East Santa Clara Street
San Jose, CA 95113-1905

Subject: Comments regarding the Coyote Valley Specific Plan in the City of San Jose,
California

Dear Mr. Horwedel,

San Benito County is writing to express our concerns regarding the Coyote Valley Specific Plan. We have reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Report and prepared this letter of concerns for your review.

Project Background

The City of San Jose has proposed the Coyote Valley Specific Plan. The proposed project is to encompass approximately 7,000 acres, 3,600 of which make up the project's greenbelt. The preferred design incorporates 50,000 industry-driven jobs and 25,000 dwelling units. The location of the proposed development encompasses the west portion of Coyote Valley, following Highway 101. The proposed project begins north near Metcalf Road and ends near Burnett Avenue to the south. This plan is one of the largest development projects in the region(s)/state(s) history and has the potential for many unavoidable impacts. Before this plan can be adopted the environmental document must be circulated and comments must be received from all potential stakeholders.

Project Alternatives:

Alternative 1

No project

Alternative 2

20,000 jobs and 10,000 dwelling units within North Coyote Campus Industrial Area (NCCIA) of Coyote Valley Specific Plan (CVSP) development area; approximately 688 gross acres of 1700 acres in the north Coyote area

Alternative 3

20,000 jobs and 10,000 dwelling units within the entire approximate 3,800 acre CVSP development, less development over total acreage

Alternative 4

“Getting it Right”

25,000 dwelling units and 53,000 jobs within 2,400 acres; higher density less acreage

Alternative 5

Alternative locations, infill within the City of San Jose

Alternative 6

Environmentally superior alternative

No development

Potential Effects for San Benito County**Air quality concerns:**

Air quality concerns for this project have not been mitigated with regard to San Benito County air quality.

San Benito County lies within the North Central Coast Air Basin and is part of the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District. The nearest monitoring site to the Coyote Valley project is located within the City of Hollister. Within San Benito County, both state ozone and PM10 standards have been exceeded during the years of 2003-2005. Currently no model projections have been developed for this proposed project; however, permanent regional impacts are listed in Appendix E of the DEIR, which are in violation of the acceptable levels of both PM10 and Ozone for the Monterey Bay Air Pollution Control District. These impacts have been addressed in the DEIR as not able to be reduced to a less than significant level and a Statement of Overriding Considerations will be necessary for long term air quality impacts. Simply described, a statement of overriding considerations provides the pros and cons of the project(s) and disregards the possible damage to the environment. This Statement does not balance the positive and negative impacts on San Benito County because the County is not receiving any benefits from this development, while at the same time absorbing many potential impacts from the proposed project. Staff has determined that this Statement does not sufficiently mitigate air quality concerns for San Benito County.

Transportation/Housing concerns:

The DEIR has not addressed any possible effects on transportation past the immediate vicinity of the proposed project. The impacts to the Highway 101, Highway 25 and Highway 156 are likely to be severe and mitigation should be seriously considered. Currently, San Benito County is doing an excellent job with transportation foresight. San Benito County is working to complete the Highway 25 bypass and Highway 156/152 flyover to reduce the all ready significant impact on major roads due to the severity of out of County commuters.

The Highway 156/152 flyover will reduce the pressure on this intersection, but with the possible expansion of 50,000 new industry-driven jobs and ~100,000 secondary jobs to the north, this intersection will again be severely impacted by the massive development. The Highway 25 Bypass is another major arterial used by commuters who travel to and from the San Jose area from San Benito County. This project is currently under construction and completion is planned for November of 2008. This project includes widening from four to six lanes to facilitate expected growth within the County. Dependent upon which type of development comes first, housing development or job development, the Coyote Valley area will likely draw more local residents to job opportunities to the north and put substantial housing pressure on areas to the south, specifically San Benito County. If alternative 1,2,3, or 4 is approved, San Benito County would likely be impacted in regards to increased congestion on Highway 101, Highway 25, Highway 156 and Highway 152. New job development would draw employees from surrounding areas into San Jose due to the lack of housing in the San Jose area. The new housing development would likely reduce the pressure on San Benito County for housing initially, but due to the number of jobs created, San Benito County can expect substantially more housing pressure than has been seen in this area in the past.

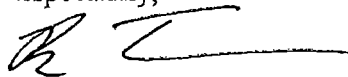
Species migration habitat loss:

San Benito County is a rural County located directly to the south of Coyote Valley; the rural nature of the County facilitates a wide variety of animals which have the potential to migrate to the north. Significant impact could occur to the migration habitat located on the east side of the valley due to massive pressure to develop both the west and east side of the Valley. Currently, mitigation measures only take in to consideration the impact to the west side of the Valley, but realistically the east side of the Valley would not be far behind in terms of development due to the massive loss of agricultural land to the west. This would potentially collapse the last remaining agricultural pocket in the area, the eastern portion of Coyote Valley. Due to the fact that Coyote creek connects the east and the west portions of the valley, there is potential for loss of habitat migration corridors in Coyote Valley and beyond.

Conclusion:

After through review of the Coyote Valley Specific Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report, San Benito County has determined that the direct and indirect impacts associated with this potential project have not been fully mitigated by this document. San Benito County looks forward to the opportunity to create open communication with the City of San Jose in order to help facilitate quality regional growth today and in the future.

Respectfully,



Mr. Byron Turner
Principal Planner
San Benito County